

CA UIC Desk Statement

October 2015

U.S. EPA is continuing its review of California's Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources' (DOGGR) Class II Underground Injection Control primacy program, including the state's implementation of the Class II UIC program, the identification of Class II injection wells that may be injecting into non-exempt aquifers, the state's ongoing assessment of drinking water sources that may be impacted by improper injection, and the establishment of an effective process for reviewing and approving aquifer exemptions in California. EPA's December 22, 2014, letter directed the state to submit a Program Revision Plan by February 6, 2015. After reviewing the state's plan, and based on further discussion with the state agencies, EPA issued a letter to the state on March 9, 2015 concurring on key aspects of the state's plan and setting out a schedule of activities and deliverables, with target milestones and compliance deadlines to ensure that the state continues to make progress towards full compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The state has promulgated emergency regulations which include deadlines to cease injection where an aquifer exemption has not been approved by EPA.

In accordance with the timeframe set forth in EPA's March 9, 2015 California Class II UIC Program Corrective Action Plan Schedule, on October 15, 2015, any wells injecting into non-exempt, non-hydrocarbon-bearing aquifers with total dissolved solids levels below 3,000 mg/l TDS will be shut-in unless an aquifer exemption is approved by EPA. If a determination is not made by October 15, 2015, then as stated by the state's emergency regulations, all injection activity must cease for this category of wells until such a time that an aquifer exemption is approved by EPA. To date, EPA has not received any aquifer exemption applications, and approximately thirty wells will be shut-in by the October 15th deadline. EPA will conduct reviews of proposed aquifer exemptions as they are submitted by the state.

EPA will continue our oversight of the state's efforts to ensure that California's Class II UIC program is in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. To access information about EPA's review of CA's UIC program, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/mediacenter/uic-review/index.html>.

Q&A:

Why are wells injecting into non-exempt, non-hydrocarbon-bearing aquifers with total dissolved solids below 3,000 mg/l TDS required to shut-in by October 15, 2015?

How many wells will be shut-in?

What does it mean to shut-in a well?

Are these wells permanently shut-in?

How does shutting in a well protect my drinking water?

How will the state confirm that these wells are shut-in?

How does an operator get approval to resume injection once a well has been shut-in?

Do any of these operators plan to apply for an aquifer exemption?

What is EPA's role in this?